

P 091601Z FEB 90
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8874
INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY HARARE
AMEMBASSY LONDON

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 02455

CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: PGOV PHUM SF
SUBJECT: THE BEAT GOES ON: MASS PROTEST ACTIONS PROLIFERATE

REF: (A) PRETORIA 1985, (B) JOHANNESBURG 156,
(C) PRETORIA 1310, (D) PRETORIA 1311

¶1. (C) - ENTIRE TEXT

SUMMARY

¶2. THE LEVEL OF PROTEST ACTION CONTINUES TO RISE IN THE WAKE OF PRESIDENT DE KLERK'S FEBRUARY 2 PARLIAMENTARY SPEECH. A GROWING NUMBER OF BLACK COMMUNITIES HAVE ORGANIZED RALLIES AROUND LOCAL ISSUES, WHILE THE REBEL CRICKET TOUR AND THE UNBANNING OF ORGANIZATIONS HAVE PROVIDED A NEW FOCUS OF ACTIVITY. MOST DEMONSTRATIONS CARRY A PALPABLE RISK OF CONFRONTATION AND VIOLENCE BETWEEN POLICE AND PROTESTERS, OR BETWEEN PARTICIPATING ANTI-APARTHEID FACTIONS. THIS TENSION PREVAILS AT THE VERY TIME PRETORIA IS UNDER PRESSURE TO RELEASE MANDELA (SURE TO ROCKET BLACK ENTHUSIASM) AND REMOVE THE STATE OF EMERGENCY IN FULL.

END SUMMARY

¶3. IN THE PRETORIA-JOHANNESBURG AREA ALONE, AT LEAST 5 RALLIES TOOK PLACE WITHIN THE PAST WEEK. THIS DOES NOT COUNT THE PROTEST ACTIONS SURROUNDING THE REBEL BRITISH CRICKET TOUR WHICH IS ATTRACTING ALMOST DAILY PROTESTS.

ALEXANDRA

¶4. IN PERHAPS THE LARGEST EVER DEMONSTRATION IN ALEXANDRA (NORTHERN JOHANNESBURG), AN ESTIMATED 50,000 RESIDENTS LED BY THE ALEXANDRA CIVIC ORGANIZATION MARCHED ON FEBRUARY 3 FROM THE LOCAL STADIUM TO THE CITY COUNCIL OFFICES AND THE POLICE STATION TO PRESENT PETITIONS. EVEN BEFORE WINNIE MANDELA APPEARED ON THE SCENE, THE DEMONSTRATION HAD BECOME VOCIFEROUSLY AN ANC UNBANNING CELEBRATION. THE POLICE MAINTAINED A LOW PROFILE.

ATTERIDGEVILLE

¶5. THE ATTERIDGEVILLE-SAULSVILLE RESIDENTS ORGANIZATION (ASRO) SPONSORED AND DIRECTED A SIMILAR EXERCISE IN MASS MOBILIZATION THE NEXT DAY (FEBRUARY 4) OUTSIDE PRETORIA. SOME 60-80,000 RESIDENTS JOINED THE MARCH TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES WHERE A PETITION WAS DELIVERED GIVING THE CITY COUNCILLORS ONE MONTH TO ADDRESS A MYRIAD OF TOWNSHIP GRIEVANCES (RENT INCREASES, EVICTIONS, MISAPPROPRIATION OF FUNDS, ETC.).

¶6. AGAIN, ANC SYMPATHIZERS DOMINATED THE GATHERING; ONLY ANC, SACP, UDF, COSATU, AND SWAPO BANNERS WERE IN EVIDENCE. PARTICIPANTS WHO APPEARED WITH T-SHIRTS BEARING AZAPO (BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS) OR PAM/PAC (AFRICANIST) LOGOS WERE SUMMARILY TOLD TO REVERSE THE SHIRT OR GO HOME.

17. POLICE AT TIMES SEEMED TO BE TRYING TO PROVOKE A CONFLICT AS THEIR VEHICLES SPED RECKLESSLY THROUGH THE THRONGS OF PROTESTERS FOR NO APPARENT REASON. THE PEOPLE, WHO HAD BEEN WARNED AGAINST SUCH PROVOCATIONS BY COMMUNITY LEADERS RETREATED TO NEARBY YARDS TO AVOID INJURY.

TEMBISA

18. VIOLENCE ERUPTED IN TEMBISA (OUTSIDE JOHANNESBURG) DURING A FEBRUARY 5 PROTEST CALLED BY LOCAL MASS DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT LEADERS. A PETITION DELIVERED TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES CALLED FOR AN END TO THE STATE OF EMERGENCY AND RESTRICTION ORDERS ON 20 TEMBISA ACTIVISTS, LOWER RENTAL RATES, AND THE RESIGNATION OF THREE SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS. APPARENTLY, YOUNG DEMONSTRATORS ATTACKED NON-PARTICIPANTS IN THE ANNOUNCED STAYAWAY, WHICH BROUGHT RETALIATORY POLICE ACTION. SEVEN PEOPLE WERE SERIOUSLY INJURED BY POLICE TEARGAS CANISTERS AND BIRDSHOT.

GARANKUWA

19. ABOUT 70,000 PEOPLE ON FEBRUARY 7 MARCHED TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES IN GARANKUWA, SOME 30 MILES NORTHWEST OF PRETORIA INSIDE BOPHUTHATSWANA. THE PETITION LODGED BY COMMUNITY LEADERS FOCUSED AGAIN ON LOCAL GRIEVANCES (E.G., HIGH RENT AND SERVICES BILLS), BUT ALSO CALLED FOR THE RESIGNATION OF BOPHUTHATSWANA PRESIDENT MANGOPE'S GOVERNMENT AND THE REINCORPORATION OF THE "INDEPENDENT" HOMELAND INTO SOUTH AFRICA.

110. AGAIN, CHARTERIST-ORIENTED GROUPS PROVIDED THE BULK OF MARCHERS, THOUGH A FEW STEVE BIKO (BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS) POSTERS COULD BE SEEN HELD HIGH. THE BOPHUTHATSWANA POLICE, TOO, WERE PLAYING A FAMILIAR ROLE, TRYING (UNSUCCESSFULLY) TO SEAL OFF THE PROTEST ROUTE. IN FRUSTRATION NEAR THE END OF A LONG DAY, SEVERAL GROUPS OF POLICE FIRED TEAR GAS AND BIRDSHOT INTO THE DISPERSING CROWD, HARMING AT LEAST A DOZEN PEOPLE. AT ANOTHER POINT A POLICE VEHICLE SPED INTO A GROUP KILLING ONE PERSON, AND SERIOUSLY INJURING SEVERAL OTHERS. DESPITE THESE POLICE ACTIONS, THE DEMONSTRATION REMAINED GENERALLY PEACEFUL.

SOWETO CELEBRATION OF ANC UNBANNING

111. EMBASSY HAS BEEN INVITED TO ATTEND THE UDF-AFFILIATED SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTH CONGRESS (SAYCO) RALLY IN SOWETO ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11 TO CELEBRATE THE ANC'S UNBANNING. WE SUSPECT OTHER LOCATIONS WILL HAVE SIMILAR RALLIES IN THE DAYS AHEAD, BUILDING TO A CRESCENDO FOR MANDELA'S RELEASE.

COMMENT: STEADY AS SHE GOES

112. THE TOWNSHIP MOBILIZATION TACTICS ADOPTED BY THE CHARTERIST-LED OPPOSITION ARE DESIGNED TO MAINTAIN PRESSURE ON THE SAG IN THIS PERIOD OF NASCENT DIALOGUE. THESE ACTIONS HOLD SIGNIFICANT RISKS FOR VIOLENT CONFRONTATION EITHER WITH THE AUTHORITIES OR, CONCEIVABLY, WITHIN THE RANKS OF THE ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT. SUCH A VIOLENT OUTBREAK, DEPENDING ON ITS SCALE, COULD DELAY THE SAG'S TIMETABLE FOR TAKING ADDITIONAL STEPS TOWARD NEGOTIATION, LIKE THE RELEASE OF MANDELA AND THE LIFTING OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY. YET, THESE MAY BE THE VERY MEASURES REQUIRED TO GET "TALKS ABOUT TALKS" OFF THE GROUND. WHILE THE OPPOSITION PONDERS ITS RESPONSE TO DE KLERK'S BREATH-TAKING PARLIAMENTARY SPEECH (SEPTEL), WE WONDER IF THE SAG ALSO FEELS THE SQUEEZE. END COMMENT

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